

# MIST

NEWSLETTER #4

A stack of four books is shown on a wooden surface. On top of the books are a pair of black-rimmed glasses and a white cylindrical pencil holder filled with various colored pencils. The background is a soft, out-of-focus teal color.

## MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS: AN UNSPOKEN CATASTROPHE

JANUARY 2021

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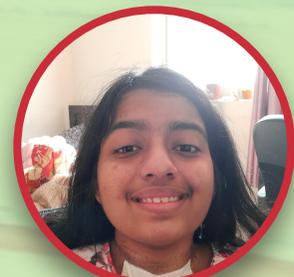
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# Students Behind the Curtain of School Stress

By: Riddhima Raj



All of us experience a certain level of stress in our day to day lives which is normal and healthy. Dealing stress in a positive manner is something that everyone needs to learn and students, especially, usually fall into this "black hole" of stress. Some adults can communicate how stress impacts their life and can manage it well, but it can often be harder for students to recognize stress and manage it. The main question is "what is the root of stress" in students? Guardians of these students should ask themselves why stress is happening in the first place- knowing what is causing the child stress is the first step towards helping them out. Stress among school students has increased tremendously over the past few years. Most common reasons for student stress all across the globe are:

- o Workload - A heavy workload can be a major source of stress for students. When the quantity of work increases, the quality decreases.
- o Weighty homework- When a student is weighed down or frustrated by homework, it makes it harder for him or her to do the work efficiently. This can cause a stressful cycle where homework piles up and the student doesn't have the time or energy to complete it all—leading to even more stress.
- o Tests - Many students worry about getting a good grade or simply making time to study. Test stress doesn't just affect struggling students- high-achievers usually experience a lot of stress about doing well on tests.
- o Poor organizational skills - Students with poor organizational skills tend to experience more stress in school. If those organization skills don't improve, they may continue to fall behind, leading to more stress and frustration in school.
- o Busy schedules - No free time and a busy schedule can often cause students to feel overwhelmed. Students without good time management skills can experience even more stress.

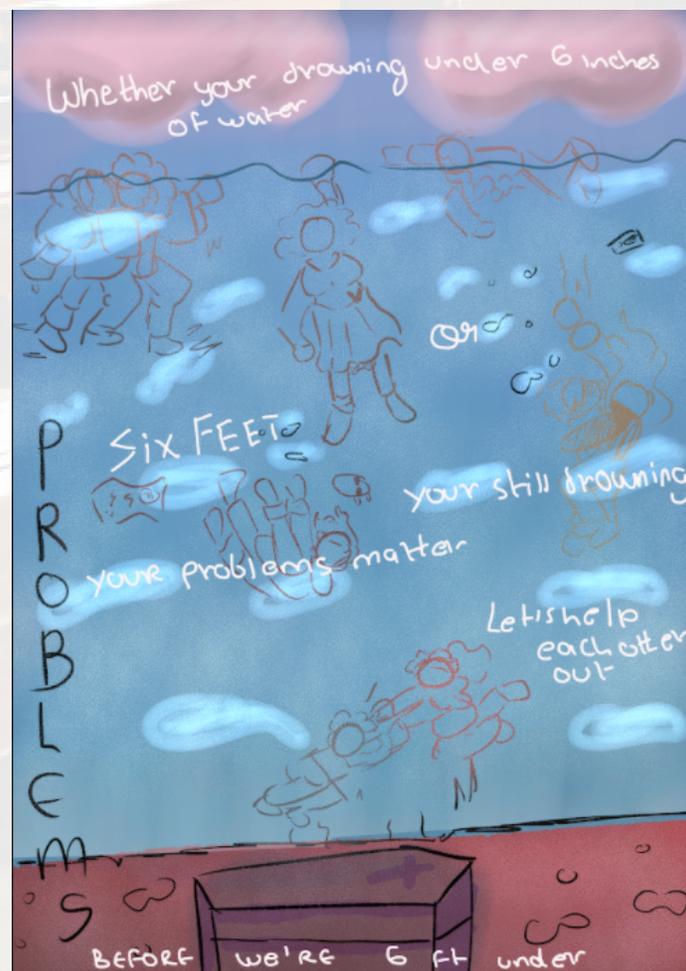
Examinations, assignments, and other school activities often fill up students with a monster of stress. Adding on to this, parents and teachers also often pressurize students to get good grades and perform well in their classes. Moreover, students are forced to participate in extracurricular activities, not to enjoy but to excel in them. This creates even more stress in a student's life. Adults need to understand every child is different in their own way. Pressuring them will do no good to them, and instead,

lead them towards stress, depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. This cut throat era that we live in is just running behind good grades and ignoring the personal growth of students. What students need to learn is how to manage time and take stress in a positive way. It is important to do what we love or to love what we do. Stress coping strategies (such as organizational skills, exercise, mindfulness, and taking time to relax) help students fight stress, which will in turn help them pay more attention to their activities and allow them to become more productive. Naturally, the quality of their work will increase.

Sources: <https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources/student-stress/>

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/science-behind-student-stress>

<https://www.oxfordlearning.com/causes-of-school-stress/>



Drawing by Riva Pereira



# The Teenager Concussion Resource

## A Guide for Your Recovery



By: Sam Lustgarten

*Note: This article was originally published through the Headway Foundation and has the rights to be reprinted: <https://headwayfoundation.com/>*

Concussions are incredibly hard injuries to recover from, able to be a real pain in the neck (get the pun...?). The struggle of having concussions as a teenager comes not only from physical symptoms, but also from emotional stress caused by your injury, increasing academic workload to make up, and a social life that is strained by lack of contact with much of anyone. Here lies the age-old question of concussion recovery: how the heck do I deal with this?

Fear not, dear reader of mine! For I, throughout my own experiences with 12 concussions, have earned some hard-won wisdom on how to handle the social, emotional, and academic parts of a concussion and look good while doing it, and have compiled them here for your use.

### Don't Take Everything Personally:

- While it might be difficult, focus on what's happening around you
- Look around the area to see if someone is doing anything that could exacerbate your symptoms: the last thing you want is to be hit in the head again and have to restart your recovery at square one
- This also applies to your emotions: ask yourself how you are feeling and recognize any anxiety, depression, and/or irritability that seems unwarranted

### What did the Vikings say to their concussed comrade? Skooool!

### Be Situationally Aware:

- Teenagers can be mean, selfish, and will most likely do or say something that is insensitive to your struggles
- Usually they'll not have malicious intent, but just don't understand your injury
- Ask them to stop harmful behavior, and be honest about your experiences: odds are, they'll respect what you said and cut it out
- If a person continues to aggravate you after you ask them to cut it out, stop talking to them: they're too toxic to deal with

**Man, I hope the Headway Foundation can make an IMPACT on concussion culture!**

## **Remember You Will Get Better:**

- Knee deep in the weeds of concussion-induced emotional turmoil, you'll probably feel like nothing will ever go well again and think this is your new life
- It will get better: thousands of people have looked at concussions and said, "you don't control me"
- This is a hard hurdle, yes, but one you will get over!

*It's like they say: No Brain, No Gain!*

## **Be Positive and Happy:**

- If you are struggling to think about that light of health at the end of your concussion tunnel, then focus on being positive with the little things
- Be proud of the little accomplishments, like getting through a day
- Surround yourself with happiness: watch funny movies or TV shows, make jokes with your family, eat foods that make you feel good
- Be happy that through it all you're still you!

*How did the sheep get a concussion? By ramming into everything!*

## **Take Charge and Change the Narrative:**

- You are not defined by your concussion
- Fight to become better, make-up work, reconnect with people, and strengthen your mind and body
- It's incredibly hard to "will" yourself into getting better from a concussion, but trust me: devotion to your return to a normal life will make your recovery that much quicker and easier
- When healthy again, you'll realize you are not just recovered, but an even better version of yourself

*What do you call learning online with a concussion? Purgatory.*

## **Advocate for Yourself:**

- Don't be too timid to ask for help from your school and teachers
- Always ask if you need it; usually the school will respect you more for asking for help rather than suffering in silence
- Make sure the school follows protocol and gives you everything you need to succeed!
- If they violate protocol, inform your teacher or administrator that this is not the way, and if they don't budge, talk to deans, principals or anyone else who can make sure protocol is followed

*What do you call a concussed apple? Crabby.*

### **Use Your Free Time:**

- The odds are that if you're going through a concussion, you'll have a lot of new free time
- If you can, try not to sit around and mull over your experiences: use this time to try and educate yourself on new topics or even become involved in new organizations, if your health can handle it
- This can help give you more confidence to get better because you are actively doing something rather than just being idle

*What type of music is on my concussion playlists? Real headbangers, that's what!*

### **Put Yourself Out There:**

- Don't be afraid to be social again after long periods of isolation
- Talk, make jokes, interact with as many people as possible to form new friendships or talk to those you haven't been close with since your injury
- You don't need to talk about your injury, but concussions can be a remarkably good conversation starter!

*What do you call emotional problems while concussed? It's a world of imagination!*

### **Try Anything You Can To Recover:**

- If you're like me, you like to have all of your schoolwork and interactions with people be the best it can be
- Always try to do your best, but when you're going through a head injury, recognize you don't need to be perfect
- People will understand if you falter or are in pain, just give them the opportunity to know what you're going through
- Remember, you're trying to recover, not be the best

*What happened when the bread dough became concussed? It became sourdough!*

### **You Don't Need to be Perfect:**

- Of all the tips here, I believe this is the most important one
- Always attempt to do anything you need to heal or return to some form of normality
- You will most likely fail a lot, but don't let these failures discourage you
- Eventually, you'll try a new way to mend your health or get back to normal that will truly succeed and move you further towards that finish line of complete recuperation

*How does Harry Potter recover from a concussion? I don't know, it's a real Tom Riddle!*

### **Remember Recovery is Individualistic:**

- There are many more tips I could give you, but many of them are specific to me
- Remember that no matter what you do, concussions are very individualistic in how they act on a person
- Some advice can work for some and not others, so know yourself and what you need

***How did the Rock Star get a concussion? From a Rolling Stone!***

# **MIST Podcast Coming Soon!**

At MIST, one of our biggest goals is to create a safe and open space for teens to speak about mental health. Just like our newsletters, this upcoming podcast will incorporate mental health and other professionals' insights, while teen perspectives remain the main focus. We are excited to release episodes on mental health in education, the pandemic, body image, and more!

**Our writing team and host have been working hard on these first few episodes for the past 2 months. And we are excited to finally share this with you!**

**Join our host Nivi for the first episode being released next month!**



Niveditha Sukesh  
Fresno County, CA Chapter

# How Sleep Deprivation Affects the Mental Health of Students in High School

By: Isabel Phillips



Sleep deprivation is something that almost all students face throughout the school year. It is the result of endless cycles of staying up late at night to finish homework, then waking up early to go to school the next day, exhausted. Anything less than the daily recommended hours of sleep will put your physical and mental health at risk. When sleep deprived, you are more likely to quickly become frustrated when working on assignments or with interactions with family and friends. Overall, the effects of inadequate sleep can cause poor academic performance due to lack of concentration and therefore lower motivation by the inability to complete tasks.

High school students are gradually becoming overwhelmed with the significant increase in homework as they go through highschool. Additionally, students are usually engaged in after school activities that fill their afternoons; due to this activity overload, many adolescents are not receiving the necessary amount of sleep.

When teens come home from school, homework is often not the first priority. Students choose to take a break from the 7-8 hours spent in classes before starting with homework. Even before starting highschool, around 83% of students participate in afterschool activities such as sports, music lessons, and/or clubs, which take up a majority of their afternoon. These activities are proven to relieve the built up stress from their school day and also have shown to have a strong and positive influence on mental wellbeing. It is crucial that adolescents have the time to do what they are passionate about outside of school, however, this causes students to start their homework late in the afternoon. High schoolers spend slightly more than three hours of homework each night, on average. After finishing all the work that they need to do, teens immediately go to sleep only to repeat the exhausting cycle again the next day. However, workload isn't the only reason students are needing to stay up late. Around 86% of high school students procrastinate on their assignments and this habit tends to carry over into college. More than half of the 86% claim that they procrastinate

because they get distracted by other activities that they would rather be doing, but others argue that they procrastinate because they are overwhelmed with where to start. It is important to practice good homework habits in order to overcome procrastination and other habits that take you away from finishing homework earlier in the day.

A couple good homework habits include:

- Designate a regular place to do homework
- Listen to music (preferably without words) while working
- Keep track of deadlines for assignments
- Take small breaks to keep focused when working

Being able to organize your work will help teens avoid procrastinating and completing homework on time and go to bed at a reasonable time. Getting the right amount of sleep each night will allow you to be more productive during the school day and will benefit your mental health.

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# E-learning: Impact on Mental Health

By: Huvika Singh



Online school- the land of waking up 10 minutes before class starts, not having to change out of your PJ's, revisiting lectures anytime you want in close proximity to your favorite snacks throughout the school hours. You can access all your classes, right from the comfort of your warm and cozy bed. What's not to love about it?! Sadly, no matter how comfortable it is, sitting in front of a laptop for hours on end with social interaction that is exclusively online can be harmful to your mental health.

Online school doesn't have the social element of in-person school, which is crucial to students' social and emotional learning. With online classes, students may find themselves experiencing challenges as it relates to increased screen time. Feelings of isolation due to limited socialization in-person, minimized awareness and understanding of others created by in-person dialogues lead to poor mental health. Students who require structure, are easily demotivated and prone to procrastination will find themselves falling behind. This can easily lead to increased instances of amplified levels of stress and anxiety.

Additionally, students are also prone to experiencing "Zoom fatigue". Video chats make it harder for our brains to process non-verbal cues like facial expressions, the tone and pitch of the voice, and body language. Delays in the video conference can make it harder to feel like you are having a natural conversation with the other people in your call. Being aware you are on camera can also be energy-draining, as you may feel more conscious of how you appear to others and feel pressured to perform.

In addition to zoom fatigue and mental health issues, the increased hours of screen time during online classes cause digital eye strain. The American Optometric Association recommends the 20-20-20 rule, which requires one to take 20 seconds to look at something at least 20 feet away after every 20 minutes of screen time. In that case, students should be taking screen breaks at least once every class period. This often ends up being difficult to follow. After hours of video calls, students have homework, which is largely online as well.

Itching to ditch online school and take a twelve-hour nap instead? Here are some things you can do to improve your mental health and wellbeing, without missing out on your classes-

### **1. Journaling:**

Make it a habit to list out all the things that you have accomplished, all the things that are going well and all the things you are grateful for.

### **2. Healthy eating:**

That family-pack of Oreos may look appetizing, but it's not great for your body. Sate your sugar cravings with a fruit bowl or a smoothie, it's delicious and nutritious!

### **3. Go easy on yourself:**

It's easy to berate yourself when you fall asleep at 5am binge-watching Netflix- holding yourself accountable for mistakes is important, but self-compassion is also essential for your mental health. Don't stress if you can't check off everything on your to-do list.

### **4. Don't be afraid to ask for help**

Whether it's talking to a loved one, your parents or your friends, there's is nothing wrong with asking for help. Talking to someone about your feelings will lift your spirits and provide an outlet.

### **5. Engage in things that make you happy:**

Set some time aside for activities that perpetuate joy- doodling, painting, listening to music, reading books, singing in the shower, whatever it may be.

### **6. Reward yourself:**

Make sure you acknowledge your work and reward yourself for it! Remember to recontinue your value and worth, and give yourself a pat on the back.

### **Sources:**

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# 5 STUDY TIPS FOR DISTANCED LEARNING



By: Maanvi Aggarwal

**Because, let's face it, distance-learning sucks.**

While nothing compares to school in-person, here are some ways to make learning easier!



## Write a Checklist of Assignments

Having a checklist of assignments for a time period or a day can help productivity. It can help keep you focused on the things you have to do, and it can motivate you to keep working!



## Designate a Study Spot

Having a certain spot to study can get you into the mindset of learning and helping you focus. Make sure the place is well-lit and isolated and filled with all the things you need to focus with! (fidget toys, stress balls, etc.)



## Roll Dice for Inspiration

Don't know where to start?  
Try rolling some dice to decide! Write 6 things for 6 sides of the die, then roll!  
(DnD players, this works with a 20-sided die, just make ranges based on importance!)



## Make Flashcards

Making flashcards is a great way to memorize and remember content! Writing them out can help you memorize the content. It also gives your brain a chance to retrieve that information can help! (if you don't wanna write them out, Quizlet can help too!)



## The Pomodoro Method

The Pomodoro method is a great method for studying peacefully with breaks! So, how does it work?

Step One: Plan what you want to do

Write down what you want to accomplish! This will help keep you focused!

Step Two: Do One Pomodoro

5 minutes (Break)



25 minutes (Work)

Step Three: Repeat Three More Times, then take a longer break!

5 minutes (Break)

5 minutes (Break)

10 minutes (Break)



25 minutes (Work)

25 minutes (Work)

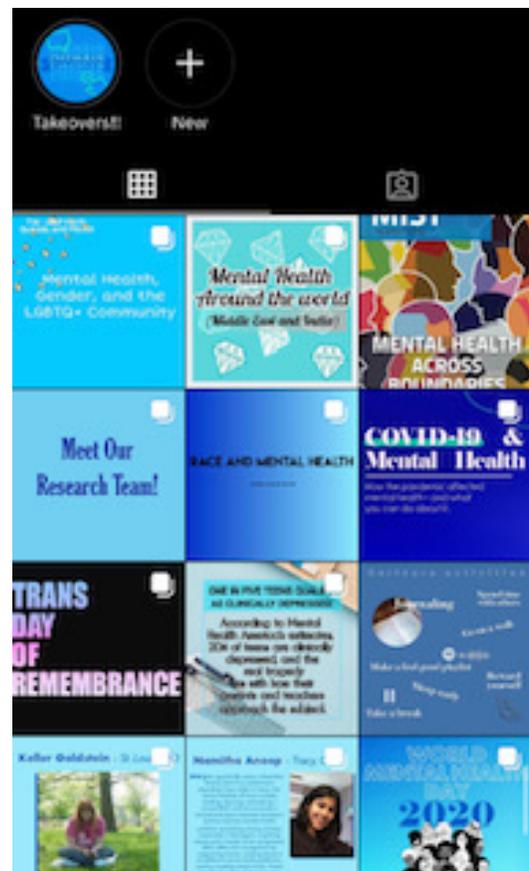
25 minutes (Work)

# Volunteer Applications Re-opened!

**Our new volunteer program is more flexible than ever!**

You now no longer have to commit to one of the volunteer teams (social media, recruitment, or research). Instead, you get to choose whichever volunteer task sounds the most fun to you each month. Task options will often include creating posts for our social media page, researching for posts, helping with our ongoing projects like the newsletter and podcast. And as always, we are open to hearing any ideas you have on how you want to help out! We would love to have you on the team and hope you consider applying!

**You can sign up by  
emailing us at:  
[mist.teens@gmail.com](mailto:mist.teens@gmail.com)**



# I Had a Test Today

By: Ava Janes



In English class, I thought about the math test I just took, curious as to what might have happened during the test and how I performed on it. *What might have I gotten and what about my peers? How many did I get right? How many did I get wrong?* While doodling in my notebook and listening partially to the sound of my teacher's monotone voice, my thoughts suddenly start to speed up. *What if I didn't do well? What if I failed? What will my parents think? What will my peers think if they found out? What will my teacher think of me?* And I start to hyperventilate. *Please, I needed to do well. I studied so much.*

My anxiety feels powerful with the strength of a bull running to a torero. It hits my head with a hammer. It starts with a tap and has gradually led to the pounding that I feel everywhere in my body. I never understood how a feeling could hurt me so much. *I can't stop. I can't stop. I can't stop.* I burst up from my seat.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, may I please use the restroom?"

"Yes, but please hurry." My teacher says. I walk quickly to the bathroom as I start to hold back the pain in my head. I breathe and open the door to the restroom. I check to see if anyone is here and I go into the furthest stall. The one in the corner, which has the most space. I lock the door and sit on the cool tile floor and let my back feel its sting.

My throat hurts, the tears are there, but I stopped fidgeting and tapping. I didn't know the feeling I would have next. I was incredibly fixated on my questions. The tenseness in my muscles squeezed me with the feeling of ropes, tight ropes, pulling tighter around every limb, squeezing me to where I can't breathe. Oh no, I can't breathe. I want to scream help but I can't. No one should see me like this. No one should see how I feel. Or maybe someone should? But that's wrong. I need to hide it. Help me. I can't stop it. I'm twitching again and the tenseness stopped. The pain is so heavy everywhere. I feel I'm tired and I can no longer cry. I just need it to end. There is something wrong with me. I need help. I need this to end.

I press my forehead and hands against the cold tiles after the five minutes I sat in the bathroom. I feel numb and incredibly hot. My face feels dry and strained. My entire body feels sore as if I ran a race. I rush cold water onto my face and clean myself up. I slowly walk outside of the bathroom and head quickly back to class. I can't keep my teacher waiting.

# How to Get Involved With MIST



## 1. Join or start a chapter at your school or city!

To do this you can reach out to: [mist.teens@gmail.com](mailto:mist.teens@gmail.com)

To find our club curriculum or instructions on how to start a club visit our website written below.

## 2. Contribute to our Newsletter

Love writing articles or are good at designing pages? You can help us with the newsletter! Email Siri or Shelly if interested at the email above.

## 3. Become a speaker on our podcast

If you have a mental health story that you want to share, whether it be an experience or a service project you have worked on and you would like to share it, please reach out to Shelly and Siri with more details on how to get involved.

## 4. Stay tuned for volunteer opportunities

We are occasionally looking for new volunteers for our teams so stay turned or email us if you are interested.

## 5. Follow us on Instagram and subscribe to our future newsletters!

Our instagram: @mist\_teens,  
[https://www.instagram.com/mist\\_teens/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/mist_teens/?hl=en)

Our website: <https://mist-support.weebly.com/>

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